

3
THE

DISBANDED SUBALTERN:

K
AN

E P I S T L E

FROM

THE CAMP AT LENHAM.

CEDUNT ARMA TOGÆ.

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1783.



ADVERTISEMENT.

I KNOW not whether it will be necessary, in defence of the thought on which this Epistle is founded, to say, that the subject of it occurred to me from seeing the halls of the Inns of Court so constantly filled with cockades, as they have been during the course of this war.

I KNOW not whether it is necessary
in defence of the cause of the
the is founded, to the fact that the
occurred to me when during the fall of the
lans of Court to continue filled with
ades, as they have been during the course of
this war.

T H E

DISBANDED SUBALTERN.

HIGH o'er the drowfy camp with fultry gleam
The mid-day sun now darts his potent beam ;
The drill'd recruit now doffs his martial pride,
And throws fatigu'd his cumb'rous arms aside;
The weary files who form'd the laft night's guard,
The wifh'd embrace of Sleep no more debarr'd,
All-unrefifting catch her to their arms,
And, on clean ftaw reclin'd, enjoy her charms.
Now fome adjust their burnifh'd arms with care,
Clean the tough belt, the well-worn coat repair,
And fome beguile the fultry length of day
With many a barren joke, or tunelefs lay.

B

In

✕ In quaint derision of the steady glance

Now moves the steamy foil with mimic dance;
 Now languid Stillness holds her fullen reign
 O'er the white camp, and far-extended plain ;
 Save where some lad, (whom Fate hath doom'd to share
 The favoury kitchen's hospitable care,
 While the kind toil his reeking brows confess)
 Bears to his comrade's tent the welcome mess ;
 Save that, in yonder pool, which feeds the mill
 Close at the bottom of this tent-clad hill,
 Their brawny limbs the sun burnt soldiers lave,
 And woo the bracing freshness of the wave.

Some stripling fifer with discordant sound
 Now breaks the drowsy spell which lurks around ;
 Now, gliding swift the mazy tents among,
 Moves the relief in measur'd steps along;
 And now, while yet the fervour of the ray
 Forbids the lounge's restless step to stray,
 My walls unhung, beneath my old marquee,
 I give the vacant hour (my friend) to thee.

Too

Some stripling fifer with discordant sound
Now breaks the drowsy spell which lurks around ;
Now, gliding swift the mazy tents among,
Moves the relief in measur'd steps along;
And now, while yet the fervour of the ray
Forbids the lounge's restless step to stray,
My walls unhung, beneath my old marquee,
I give the vacant hour (my friend) to thee.

Too soon, alas! pale Peace, with listless smile,
 Shall spread her pinions o'er this hapless isle,
 While gaping crowds, who mark her hov'ring high,
 Shall with applauding tumults rend the sky.
 Not so your friend---with grief oppress'd I see
 That peace which smiles on many frown on me,
 Damp ev'ry pleasure, ev'ry bliss destroy,
 And nip the budding blossom of my joy.

No longer now the well-brac'd drum shall cheer
 With something less than sixty pounds a year,
 For know, my friend, that unrelenting fate
 Hath doom'd me to the toil which most I hate.
 In me my partial guardians thought they saw
 Sufficient sober dullness for the law,
 When the gay pomp of battle's proud array
 With charms resistless led my heart away,
 Yet still (for, dire effect of pale-ey'd peace!
 This darling scene, this lov'd employ shall cease)
 From early youth instructed to fulfil
 With due respect their well-debated will,

The

The mind rebellious must I frame to bear
This life of apathy, this load of care.

No more the bursting thunder of the gun,
Which marks the moment of the setting sun,
To which bold signal, with suspended hand,
The neat-clad drummers all-attentive stand,
Prepar'd, with nicely-tim'd address, to beat
The martial honours of the day's retreat,
(While the mix'd sounds in one vast swell combine)
With awful melody shall float along the line.

Rouz'd by the brisk reveillez early sound
No more my steps shall print the dew-clad ground,
To trace the mild approach of sober day,
Skirting yon summit with his mantle grey ;
While from the vale, to cheer the doubtful morn,
The light-arm'd trooper winds his bugle horn,
And the disdainful charger, neighing shrill,
His challenge answers, or derides his skill.

Fancy no more, with pride delusive warm,
Must feed on every self-created form,

O'er

O'er ev'ry object shed her glowing hue,
And live in scenes which she alone can view.

The cold, and cautious eye must now behold
The grove's rich tints, the field of waving gold,
The quarry pointed, and the fallow grey,
With all the varied landscape's rich array,
Their use with frigid apathy to scan,
Or weigh their profit to laborious man.

“ Rous'd by the brisk reveillez early found
“ No more my steps shall print the dew-clad ground ;
Thro' the dull pane the yellow morn shall peep,
And snatch me grateful from unhallow'd sleep;
When rising stupid from a restless bed,
With all a London fog about my head,
By gales, with kennel filth impregnate, fann'd,
My quashing steps shall trace the twilight stand
To seek Aftrea's fane, whose Gothic gate
Shakes on its hinges at the loud debate,
To take my station at the wrangling bar,
And join the rob'd brigade in learned war.

Farewell the joys which mirth and wine afford,
 And all the pleasures of the festive board
 Which to our eager claim the drum devotes
 In sage, prescriptive, * emblematic notes.

The clock with four sad solemn strokes shall call
 My listless footsteps to yon cold damp hall,
 Whose pride-emblazon'd windows richly dight
 Exclude the searching glare of tell-tale light,
 Whose fretted roof, in intricacy wove,
 Pourtrays the labyrinth her inmates love.

Farewel the friendly joke, which half reveal'd
 An Ensign's blunder in the morning field,
 What nymph's disdain contracts the Major's brow,
 Or who accepts the Doctor's useful vow ;
 Farewel those manners, whose result combin'd
 The well-dress'd person with the polish'd mind,

The

* *Emblematic*.—The respectable tunes of *Roast Beef*, *Peas upon a trencher*, &c. have been, time out of mind, beat as the call to dinner.

The temperate glass which friendly warmth improves, }
 The band select whose known discretion moves }
 The feeling boy to toast the girl he loves. }
 Now from the sweets of social converse cast,
 While wooden trenchers bear the trifling repast,
 My frugal meals shall three dull strangers share,
 Gazing askant with caution's frigid air.

Can I, my friend, without regret behold
 This crimson'd scarlet, and this tarnish'd gold ?
 Ev'n now my soul prophetic views the day,
 When o'er this heath my partial steps shall stray,
 Anxious, in pilgrimage devout, to trace
 Each time-worn vestige of this hallow'd place,
 And pensive musing, when, perhaps in vain,
 I seek this much-lov'd spot to ascertain,
 Where many an hour has pass'd in social glee,
 Where now I give the vacant hour to thee.
 To former scenes shall partial memory fly,
 And each shall claim the tribute of a sigh.

When

When former scenes shall rise again to view,
 And joys long-past their flatt'ring forms renew,
 Say shall my soul the jovial march forget,
 Or trace its pleasures, but with fond regret ?

When orient day first glimmers in the skies,
 Wak'd by the General's lively call we rise,
 And while with active vigour we prepare
 To breast the keenness of the morning air,
 The sun-burnt soldier at an alehouse door
 Pays from his scanty purse his last night's score,
 And, as his host a parting draught bestows,
 The cumb'rous belt o'er his broad shoulders throws,
 Adjusts his knapsack, shakes his landlord's hand,
 His musket grasps, and takes his silent stand.

Now to the martial band's enliv'ning sound,
 In duely-measur'd steps we beat the ground;
 But not unmindful of the window's height,
 Which courts on either side the glancing fight,
 We pass along---for there, all unarray'd,
 Sweet as the morn, appears the lovely maid,

The

The well-adjusted curtain half reveals
 Those charms which yet no cruel robe conceals,
 For at the drum's rude sound she left her bed,
 By punctual love, or idle fancy led,
 Perhaps her eyes, with vacant pleasure stray
 O'er the well-form'd battallion's proud array,
 Perhaps she seeks, repentant, to renew,
 With kinder token the last night's adieu.

Up the steep hill, or through the drizzly grove,
 Or clayey vale, with sturdy step, we move,
 While jocund as the party winds along,
 Bursts the loud laugh, or swells the chearful song.

Can I forget, with emulation fir'd,
 When my steps led them, and my mirth inspir'd,
 How the men strove, with tale or carrol gay,
 To smoothe the destin'd labour of the way,
 Proud to divert, and grateful to my care,
 How oft they vied th' approving laugh to share,
 While the joke feign'd to seek a comrade's ear
 Was just told loud enough for me to hear?

See o'er yon brow, the goal of our desires,
 At ev'ry step extend its length'ning spires,
 While youth and age, the trader and the clown,
 Sally to meet us from the desert town ;
 While many a lovely maiden trips along,
 (Theme of the mercer's toast, or curate's song,)
 And hailing our approach with chearful smiles,
 Glances inspiring ardour through the files.

Full many a furlong have I trac'd unseen
 The comely serjeant's military mien,
 His port erect, his firm, commanding air,
 The hoary honours of the well-club'd hair,
 His furr-coned helmet worn with studied grace,
 The plumage waving o'er his burnish'd face,
 The well-expanded sash of varied dye,
 Whose fringe rode graceful on his manly thigh,
 The well-clean'd belts which cross'd his ample breast,
 His strutting chitterlin, and snowy vest ;
 Sweets which alone the wedded foldier proves,
 The darling labour of the girl he loves.

When

When (as we march'd the gazing crowd among)
 He caught th' applauding murmurs of the throng,
 I saw his mien elate with honest pride,
 I saw him woo the glance from side to side,
 With more expressive note his ready feet
 Responsive echo'd the drum's chearful beat,
 Stern glanc'd his eye, full rose his swelling chest,
 And all the martial coxcomb stood confest.

In times of yore, when laden with renown,
 Our war-worn Knights, within their native town,
 Heard with due praise their martial prowess told,
 And liv'd in liberal splendor uncontroll'd,
 Where yon old mansion opes its friendly gate
 Sir Arthur dwelt in hospitable state,
 There the firloin his Sunday table crown'd,
 There flow'd his mead in copious draughts around.

In the rude majesty of many years
 Its front immense the old wild structure rears,
 But, fall'n its pride! the sable clouds which rise,
 Curling their spiral eddies to the skies,

The

The ballustrade which o'er the portal bends,
 The branching sign which o'er the street extends,
 The crowded gate, the bar-bell's tinkling din,
 Speak to our wish the warm and welcome inn.
 The laden foldier hears that word at last
 Which speaks the labour of the morning past,
 While his quick step and bright'ning eye confess
 Th' anticipation of a savoury mess.
 The servant now, to chalk his master's door,
 Springs o'er the crazy gallery's bending floor;
 The rosy landlord, with demeanour big,
 Adjusts the silver honours of his wig,
 That wig curtail'd by fly display to deck
 The well-contrasted collops of his neck;
 The busy bar with speed he now forsakes,
 And his high station at the window takes,
 Whence, while the proffer'd Colours claim his care,
 He courts the sacred trust with conscious air.

Need I relate what various pleasures crown
 The listless faunter round the busy town,

When

When dress, at whose approach pale langour flies,
 With lenient hand, refreshing aid supplies,
 And kindly frees us from the mirey load
 Of which our passing steps had robb'd the road.
 Eager to cheat an anxious hour of fast,
 The doom'd forerunner of our wish'd repast,
 Nor void of hope the far fam'd toast to meet
 With lounging step we trace some unknown street,
 With heart unconscious, but attentive eye,
 Returning careless, as we pass her by,
 The lovely milliner's habitual wile,
 Her ogle transient, or spontaneous smile.

Our homely dinner careless health approves,
 And appetite, stern labour's offspring, loves,
 And oft the twice-told stories of the day
 The circling flask's progressive course delay.

At length in sleep's refreshing arms we find
 That balmy rest which woos the vacant mind,
 Where toil bestows a slumber so profound
 It starts reluctant at the *troop's* rude sound.

These scenes (too soon to cease !) whose magic pow'r
 On mirth's light pinions lifts the fleeting hour,
 E'en when my soul shall have forgot to feel,
 Shall o'er my torpid breast in pity steal,
 And kindly bid me know, before I die,
 The luxury of one remaining sigh.

While thus, my friend, in artless rhyme I sing
 What fond regret from former joys shall spring,
 Deem not I range in fancy's wilds alone;
 Another's feelings justify my own.

You knew Tennaile who occupied of late
 The snug brick house which fronts our paddock gate,
 The best of Kings hath mark'd his soldier's claim,
 And amply recompens'd his martial fame,
 And now that scene of many a frolic gay,
 His former dwelling, owns another's sway.

The veteran's venerable form you knew,
 His clime-chang'd countenance, and slender queue,
 His golden brow with silver tresses fring'd,
 His cheek with vigour's parting blushes ting'd,

His

His eye where still youth's wav'ring blaze remain'd,
 The darling scar which still his lip retain'd,
 His beaver which from fields of deathless fame
 Had borne its princely master's honour'd name,*
 His splendid Sunday waistcoat which of yore
 On many a well-disputed day he wore.
 Nor have you mis'd, in martial order plac'd
 The trophied arms which erst his parlour grac'd.

Oft have I stol'n from home a truant boy
 To hear of Dettingen, and Fontenoy,
 Of artful ambuscades, of stern alarms,
 And prowess highly-fam'd in deeds of arms,
 While the lime punch, or justly-boasted ale,
 At stated intervals have cross'd the tale.

Now sadly glancing on his votive sword,
 (While rebel feeling check'd the rising word)
 Thus would he say, "Till all-subduing death
 "Shall claim the tribute of my latest breath,

* The Cumberland hat.

- “ Ne’er shall my soul forget the fatal hour
“ When the hard hand of unrelenting power
“ Sign’d an obdurate order to disband,
“ And drove me wretched from rever’d command.
“ I love the vacant heart which mocks at toil,
“ And welcomes danger with a careless smile,
“ Whose roar of laughter spurns dull wisdom’s law,
“ And finds its frequent object in a straw.
“ Such once possess’d the files which once I led,
“ Such the brave friends with whom I fought and bled
“ How strong the chain which mutual peril binds,
“ (Tho’ soft it’s shackles press) o’er social minds !
“ How warm the love a good commander shares
“ Who courts distinction by the the toil he bears !
“ E’en now I feel that mute respect impart
“ Its wonted joys, which springing from the heart
“ Sits in the corner of the watchful eye
“ To hail the lov’d commander passing by :
“ For such display’d the files which once I led,
“ Such the brave friends with whom I fought and bled.
“ I saw

“ I saw those friends in fruitless sorrow mourn,
“ From mirth, society, subsistence torn ;
“ Their mien no more display'd war's dreadful charms,
“ In fallen plight they pil'd their long-lov'd arms.

“ When on the morning of that fatal day
“ Doom'd the degrading pageant to display,
“ The gaudy Band with countenance dismay'd
“ Stood ready form'd upon their last parade,
“ And the neat drummers waited the command,
“ Their eyes intent upon their Major's hand ;
“ On my spontoon in listless mood reclin'd,
“ I woo'd the grief which sooth'd my sadden'd mind.
“ The last sad troop beat off---the mournful roll
“ Burst like a torrent o'er my torpid soul;
“ The cheerless file in melancholy swell
“ Sung to my heart oppress'd a sad farewell :
“ The brisk salute all-anxious to display
“ When the respectful centry thwarts my way,
“ His care unnotic'd may I turn aside,
“ And wound with cold neglect his honest pride.

“ If the last cadence of a sound so dear
 “ Had not disgrac’d me with a coward tear,
 “ But that the foldier swelling in my breast,
 “ In painful victory that tear repress’d.

Our veteran thus---and while a tranfient glow
 Hail’d his past joy, or mourn’d his former woe,
 Fir’d with his ardour, check’d with his difmay,
 Sad when he forrow’d, with his pleafure gay,
 A young enthufiaft, of untemper’d zeal,
 I taught my reftlefs foul with his to feel;
 For Fancy then difplay’d her wily charms,
 And frequent woo’d me to her Syren arms;
 And Fancy ftill, all-anxious to deceive,
 With fpecious art endears thofe fcenes I leave;
 But while her all-feducing lay fhe fings,
 Or wafts me heedlefs on Icarian wings,
 A matron, grave, yet mild, ferene, yet gay,
 With unimpaffion’d accent feems to fay.
 “ Submit, fond youth, to Reason’s fober rule,
 “ And weigh the maxims of her honeft fchool.

“ What

“ What tho’ thy steps the fabler Fancy lead
“ Thro’ twilight grove, or flow’r-bespangled mead,
“ Where to the tawny cliff the woodbine clings,
“ Where brawls the brook, or where the linnet sings,
“ Where it’s brown breast the barren heath uprears,
“ Where the lone tow’r in gloomy state appears,
“ Where, on the shapeless mountain’s shaggy side,
“ Vast clouds in magic-varied volumes ride ;
“ While Sloth, array’d in Labour’s flattering form,
“ Clothes with fantastic shape the rolling storm :
“ Yet, yet her lov’d society forego,
“ Her charms betray to indolence, and woe,
“ And with her dwells Disgust, with fated eye,
“ Born of the baffled hope which soar’d too high :
“ Led by her wiles the bubbled mind pursues
“ Ideal objects, and chimeric views,
“ And scowls with all the peevish pride of spleen
“ On common life’s cold, trifling, tasteless scene ;

“ Yet

“ Yet, as (enfeebled by her syren strain)
 “ It shrinks from labour’s salutary pain,
 “ That scene despis’d shall cross it’s listless hours,
 “ And boldly claim it’s unexerted powers;
 “ For know this truth by care-worn Sloth confess’d,
 “ Who knows not toil, can never taste of rest.

“ The partial retrospect no more pursue,
 “ Which the fair fabler offers to thy view,
 “ No more in idle dreams of airy joy,
 “ Destin’d to nobler ends, thy time employ,
 “ Assume the robe, the sage decrees explore,
 “ Turn with due care the nightly volume o’er,
 “ The heavy curse of indolence forego,
 “ And all it’s sad variety of woe.

Sage is the counsel ! with attentive ear,
 And due respect, each well-weigh’d word I hear ;
 And thou dear image, who with ceaseless pow’r
 Presid’st supreme o’er ev’ry vacant hour,
 Who, when the taper’s half-extinguish’d fire
 From scenes of dissipation bids retire,

Deign’st

Deign'st on my pillow thy sad vigil keep,
 And claim one dear, tho' painful, hour from sleep;
 Who e'er the morn her faintest gleam bestows,
 Dispell'st the remnant of disturb'd repose,
 O give to Reason's voice redoubled force, —
 And urge my steps in labour's straining course :
 Come with that form, where I was wont to trace
 Spontaneous elegance, and active grace ;
 Glance with that eye, in whose unconscious ray,
 Strong, glowing genius ever lov'd to play ;
 Be to my sight that heav'nly mien display'd,
 Which native truth, and artless sense pervade,
 Where the mild beams of melting pity shine,
 Where courage, softness, mirth, and thought combine, }
 To mend with glowing touch cold beauty's line; }
 And with that voice which still I seem to hear,
 (Though long the space since last it blest my ear !)
 In gentlest accents tell me, that when Fate
 Shall crown my toil with pow'r, with wealth, and state,

G

Perhaps.

Perhaps my vows may less unworthy prove
 The maid whose angel form in thee I love ;
 Say that the cruel doubts which now surround
 My care-worn heart, in transport shall be drown'd,
 That doom'd no more, within my tortur'd breast,
 To hide the mining pang which murders rest,
 My haughty soul shall to the world proclaim
 That taste in love, which to profess is fame.

F I N I S.



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